

EQUITY



INDEPENDENCE



HEALING



65,000+
people given
crisis counseling

BACKGROUND

Sonoma County departments work together to provide services to meet community needs, especially those of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, including individuals with limited English proficiency or non-English speaking. Safety Net Services refers to services such as behavioral health, assistance with obtaining food and medical benefits, financial assistance, animal services and protection. Safety net service departments provide programs that help the community at-large while providing specialized services for seniors, children and youth, families, people with disabilities, and individuals who are low-income, and the homeless. Safety net services are provided in partnership with community organizations. Prior to the fires, safety net service departments were providing services with lean staffing and resources.

Sonoma County safety net services departments include the Human Services Department, Department of Health Services, Department of Child Support Services, Community Development Commission, Sheriff's Office, Probation Department, Public Defender, and the District Attorney's Office.

Impact of Fires on Safety Net Services. The October 2017 wildfires increased community demand for Safety Net Services staff and resource assistance. To respond to the immediate needs of the community in the wake of the fire, County safety net departments provided a range of services.

Safety net service departments oversaw the management of 41 shelters across the county to shelter displaced individuals and families. Mandatory evacuations during the fires resulted in over 100,000 individuals being displaced from their homes and local shelters served over 4,000 evacuees. Nurses, social workers, and behavioral health professionals from safety net departments provided medical, emotional, and social support to displaced residents and offered extended sheltering services for individuals unable to find housing after fire containment. Emergency Medical Services, within the Department of Health Services, provided response coordination, including assisting with evacuations, medical and health resources in shelters, and repopulating medical facilities. Staff also distributed supplies for displaced children, including diapers and

BACKGROUND

formula to shelters and community organizations to help evacuees in need of these supplies. To support dislocated animals during the fires, Animal Services coordinated large animal sheltering in collaboration with the Sonoma County Fairgrounds and managed over 14,000 calls to aid residents locating displaced animals.

Safety net departments provided services to meet the needs of children, seniors, individuals with disabilities, individuals needing unemployment benefits, and undocumented residents. Safety net department staff coordinated safe and supportive housing for all children who were evacuated from Valley of the Moon Children's home, overseen by the Human Services Department, within one week from the start of the fires. Staff contacted at-risk In-Home Supportive Services recipients, Probation Department clients, and other clients to determine their circumstances and needs and provide them with necessary support. Departments ensured court services continued throughout the response period, including immigration defense services, despite courthouse evacuations. Staff assisted 4,700 individuals with disaster unemployment insurance through JobLink to support individuals whose employment and income were impacted during the fires.

To protect residents, staff investigated over 250 price gouging complaints and prepared to prosecute as needed. Safety net staff also opened two emergency childcare centers for emergency response workers and other community members to allow these individuals to continue working and help with disaster relief efforts.

Throughout the fires, community members were in need of up-to-date information. Safety net service department staff largely helped over 53,000 callers get information through the Emergency Hotline. To support local organizations and service providers serving community members and families, safety net department staff prepared information on impacts of trauma in families and children and shared these critical resources throughout the county. Safety net departments also coordinated the preparation of critical safety information to help evacuees who were returning home.

BACKGROUND

To support property owners who lost their homes to the fires, the Department of Health Services Environmental Health division collected and processed over 4,500 applications for the government sponsored Consolidated Debris Removal program.

In addition to these fire-related services, safety net departments continued to provide core, mandated services while managing full caseloads.

Community-based organizations also played a critical role. Local nonprofits coordinated food collection and distribution, managed donations, and coordinated volunteers. They were key in identifying and meeting the needs of undocumented community members, individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, and individuals with limited English proficiency or non-English speaking.

Post-Fire Situation/Ongoing Efforts. People over 65 years of age and those with physical disabilities were disproportionately represented among the fire fatalities. The fires have increased demands from residents for safety net services, especially within underserved communities.

The Office of Recovery and Resiliency and the Departments of Health and Human Services engaged Harder+Company Community Research to talk to community organizations about post-fire health and human services. Harder+Company set out to identify recovery efforts and opportunities to strengthen partnerships. This information will be used to inform recovery planning and strengthen the network of safety net service providers.

Feedback obtained through these conversations also helped to inform the vision, goals, and activities of the Safety Net Services Recovery Framework.

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

It is challenging for safety net service departments to meet the increased demand for services with current staffing levels. These departments will continue to search for opportunities to expand services through innovative funding by partnering with other departments and community organizations.

Harder + Company identified a number of opportunities and challenges to meet community recovery needs. One opportunity is to enhance the 2-1-1 system. The 2-1-1 system was strained by the number of calls it received during the fires. There were not enough call takers to meet demand and up-to-date information was not always available. Other 2-1-1 system models will be evaluated to identify opportunities to improve our local system. This will look at capacity and streamlined access to resources and services during and after a disaster.

Participants also identified the need for a centralized “one-stop-shop” for residents to receive updated information regarding recovery updates and services. This Framework identifies ways to partner with existing resources to expand services to meet community needs. Participants want to see the County work more closely with community-based organizations during recovery planning and to build greater trust and authentic relationships. In developing this Framework, the Office of Recovery and Resiliency met with over 80 community groups and plans to continue expanding that list to foster partnerships.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Acknowledging that many residents continue to struggle with emotional trauma from fires, community members shared the ongoing need to ensure the post-fire mental health and resiliency needs of the community are met. Free mental health services should be expanded, including trauma informed care. Animals and pets could be used for therapy. Creating spaces for healing could help serve mental health needs.

Building partnerships and improving coordination is essential to meeting the safety net services needs of the community. Working together is critical and every organization has a role to play in recovery. They also recommended improving the management of donations, goods, and matching volunteers to organizations looking for help. Participants suggested hosting more community workshops and events to bring people together and increase communication.

Community members also think it is essential to serve individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, including individuals with limited English proficiency or non-English speaking, in recovery and disaster preparedness. Individuals who have historically experienced social inequities, including low-income individuals, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and non-English speakers need more attention and services, especially at evacuation shelters. Resources and information need to be culturally sensitive and available in Spanish.

“ We should give priorities to emergencies, so our Latino community has access to resources. So that these resources can be here during time of crisis. ”

—COMMUNITY MEMBER





STRATEGY AREA 4

Safety Net Services

GOALS

1. Enhance core County service capacity to address long-term recovery needs and prepare for future disasters.
2. Ensure the post-fire mental health and resiliency needs of the community are met.
3. Build capacity with cross sector partners and community members to improve coordination and communication.
4. Understand and address social inequities to advance opportunities for all.

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services

GOAL S1

GOAL S1

Enhance core County service capacity to address long-term recovery needs and prepare for future disasters.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:	0-1 YEAR THROUGH 2019	2-3 YEARS 2020-2021	3+ YEARS 2022+
Enhance capacity to manage disaster shelters with increased training opportunities and collaboration with community volunteer partners and jurisdictions.			
Develop a plan to ensure available resources and services at disaster shelter are accessible to non-English speaking and/or undocumented residents.			
Explore creation of contingency contracts with eligible food providers to provide healthy and nutritious food services during a disaster.			
Consider development of a contingency contract for coordination of food providers during an emergency, including an inventory and mapping of local food resources available throughout the county and nationally during disasters.			
Provide re-employment assistance for workers who have lost their jobs because employers' businesses were destroyed or impacted by fires.			
Develop a plan to set up emergency childcare facilities to allow emergency responders and community members to continue critical work needs.			
Continue housing related programs in Health & Human Services, including applying for appropriate housing grants.			
Pursue education and outreach opportunities to inform residents about how to prepare for disasters, with a focus on individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, including individuals with limited English proficiency or non-English speaking.			

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services

GOAL S1

GOAL S1

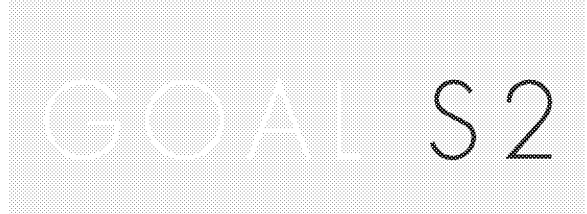
Enhance core County service capacity to address long-term recovery needs and prepare for future disasters.

ACTIONS COMPLETED:

- ✓ The Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) applied for and was awarded an Emergency Dislocated Worker Additional Assistance Grant from the California Employment Development Department for 18 months beginning March 1, 2018. This \$3.2 million grant allows the WIB and Job Link to provide business-focused assistance in response to layoffs and/or businesses closing, including layoff prevention; and re-employment assistance for workers who have lost their jobs due to the fires.
- ✓ Developed an Urban Shield exercise to test sheltering capabilities on September 6, 2018 to provide hands-on opportunity for staff to set up a shelter, including a special medical needs area.

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services



GOAL S2

Ensure the post-fire mental health and resiliency needs of the community are met.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:	0-1 YEAR THROUGH 2019	2-3 YEARS 2020-2021	3+ YEARS 2022+
Continue to provide crisis counseling, available county-wide through California HOPE, for residents affected by the fires.			
Partner with mental health professional associations, healthcare providers, funders, and nonprofits, to ensure continuity of services.			
Create a plan that addresses the short- and long-term integration of trauma-informed care in the community throughout various institutions, including schools, behavioral health services, and case management.			
Create communal healing spaces that open the conversation and destigmatize trauma, including town halls, healing clinics, or community events.			

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services

GOAL S2

GOAL S2

Ensure the post-fire mental health and resiliency needs of the community are met.

ACTIONS COMPLETED:

- ✓ Received \$1 million Initial Services Program grant from the State of California Department of Health Care Services to provide crisis counseling services in the shelters, at home site re-entry, at school re-entry, at the Local Area Assistance Center, and at community Town Halls.
- ✓ The California Department of Health Care Services committed \$3.35 million to provide ongoing crisis counseling services (California HOPE).
- ✓ Received \$1 million grant from Kaiser Permanente Northern California Community Benefit to continue the California Helping Outreach Possibilities Empowering (HOPE) program, which delivers mental health services targeting those affected by the wildfires in 2017.

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services

GOAL S3

GOAL S3

Build capacity with cross sector partners and community members to improve coordination and communication.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:	0-1 YEAR THROUGH 2019	2-3 YEARS 2020-2021	3+ YEARS 2022+
Expand “one-stop-shop” opportunities for residents to receive updated information and resources needed for recovery, which includes navigation assistance for financial advising, insurance claims, and rebuilding for those seeking to rebuild from the fires.			
Enhance services and capacity of 2-1-1 Sonoma County.			
Partner with community assessments and surveys and utilize existing community data to inform ongoing recovery priorities.			
Partner with community providers (hospitals, clinics, skilled nursing facilities, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, etc.) to develop collaborative disaster planning and preparedness efforts.			
Identify roles and responsibilities of community partners and the County as they relate to recovery activities.			
Strengthen Accessing Coordinated Care & Empowering Self Sufficiency (ACCESS) Sonoma County Initiative’s capacity to coordinate care delivery.			
Develop a technology tool to enable cross-departmental coordination and assessment of improvements in the health, well-being and self-sufficiency of high needs clients as part of the ACCESS Sonoma County Initiative.			
Ensure timely access to updates and services for residents who do not speak English by providing translation services and dedicate outreach staff to these communities during a disaster.			

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services

GOAL S3

GOAL S3

Build capacity with cross sector partners and community members to improve coordination and communication.

ACTIONS COMPLETED:

- ✓ Created ACCESS Sonoma County Initiative to coordinate care delivery. ACCESS consists of a rapid-response, interdepartmental, multi-disciplinary Team (IMDT).
- ✓ Partnered with IBM to develop a multi-departmental database to support the work of ACCESS Sonoma County to identify target populations in need of services and track data metrics for success.
- ✓ Initiated discussions with key community partners including Rebuilding Our Community (ROC) Sonoma County to collaborate on One-Stop-Shop opportunities.

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services

GOAL S4

GOAL S4

Understand and address social inequities to advance opportunities for all.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

Develop principles and guidelines to launch implementation of performance-based contracting to increase efficiency and effectiveness of safety net service delivery.

Create a comprehensive community needs assessment using a vulnerability methodology that assesses disparities and needs related to health, well-being and self-sufficiency to direct investments, resources, and policy to address unmet needs.

Leverage and utilize tools offered by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) network to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all.¹⁴

0-1 YEAR THROUGH 2019	2-3 YEARS 2020-2021	3+ YEARS 2022+

¹⁴ The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. The Alliance is a joint project of the new Race Forward.

ACTIONS & TIMELINES

Safety Net Services

GOAL S4

GOAL S4

Understand and address social inequities to advance opportunities for all.

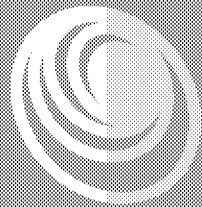
ACTIONS COMPLETED:



Gathered initial feedback from community partners towards development of contracting principles to improve community outcomes, reduce costs, strengthen accountability and create strategies that better incorporate evidence and outcomes into the contracting process.

NATURAL RESOURCES

VISION



Sonoma County's natural resources and working lands (i.e. soils, streams, groundwater, agricultural and biological resources) are healthy and productive. They are managed to support watershed and community resiliency and protect public health and safety, and contribute to enhanced ecological values, recreational opportunities, and economic vitality.